

HILDEGARD OF BINGEN AS BREAK-THROUGH THEORIST
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF SEX IDENTITY

The twelfth century Benedictine Abbess Hildegard of Bingen is without doubt one of the most significant women writers to have lived in the West. Living during the years 1098-1179 Hildegard wrote innovative works in the areas of theology, the visual arts, science, literature, music and philosophy. The list of the following titles of her books will give some indication of the incredible breadth of her productivity:

<u>Original Latin</u>	<u>and</u>	<u>German Titles</u>	<u>English Equivalent</u>
<u>Scivias</u>		<u>Wisse die Wege</u>	Know the Way
<u>Liber Simplicis</u> <u>Medicinae (Physica)</u>		<u>Naturkunde</u>	Natural Arts
<u>Liber Compositae Medicinae</u> <u>(Causae et Curae)</u>		<u>Heilkunde</u>	Healing Arts
<u>Liber Vitae Meritorium</u>		<u>Der Mensch in der</u> <u>Varantworting</u>	Man in Responsibility
<u>Liber Divinorum Operum</u> <u>(De Operatione Dei)</u>		<u>Welt und Mensch</u>	World and Man
<u>Ordo Virtutum</u>		<u>Speil der Krafte</u>	Order of Virtues

In addition, Hildegard wrote many hymns and sequences, fifty allegorical homilies, a new language of 900 words and an

alphabet of 23 letters, and numerous letters to religious and secular authorities in Europe.¹

Unfortunately, at the present time translations of original source material by Hildegard in English is very scant; none of her works have been published in their entirety in English. The only completely translated text is found in a Ph. D. Dissertation by Bruce Hozeski entitled Ordo Virtutum: Hildegard of Bingen's Liturgical Mystery Play.² Some selection from her mystical writings can be found in Hozeski's recently published Scivias.³

There has been a significant increase in secondary source material on Hildegard of Bingen in English in the last fifteen years. An extensive Bibliography of works available in German, French and English since 1970 has been prepared by Dr. Werner Lauter working in complement with Sr. Adelgundis F hrkr tter, OSB.⁴ While there appear to be no entries of English studies on Hildegard's philosophy there are some important works by scholars in other fields. In Literature we find several interesting articles by Peter Dronke, Richard Axton and Bruce Hozeski which consider the fact that Hildegard's Ordo Virtutum is the earliest known liturgical morality play in Europe.⁵

In the field of Visual Arts we have the significant reproduction of the magnificent miniatures which accompany

her mystical visions in the Scivias by Sr. Adelgundis Fùhrkrötter, OSB.⁶ The popular appeal of these images is attested to by the use of Hildegard's vision of the universe as the central focus of the middle table in Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party.⁷ We find a similar appeal to both scholars and the public in Hildegard's contribution to music. Ian Bent includes her in his Dictionary of Music and Musicians, Barbara Grant analyzes five of her Liturgical Songs in Signs, an interdisciplinary women's studies journal, and Christopher Page has recently released a record of her Sequences and Hymns.⁸

In the field of Theology we have some significant in depth analyses which are available in Ph. D. Dissertations: Charles Czarsky and Patricia Ann North have analyzed the prophecies of Hildegard, while Barbara Newman considered the more specific relation of God and woman and of the feminine aspect of the Divine as found in Hildegard's writings.⁹ Newman's important work is forthcoming in book form in 1987. There are also interesting articles by W. P. Eckhert on Hildegard's visions of Synagoga in the Scivias and by Bernard Scholz on Hildegard's views concerning the nature of woman.¹⁰

Finally, in the broad area of Science, we find Charles Singer considering Hildegard's theory of generation and her reflections on the relation of microcosm to macrocosm; Kent

Thomas Kraft describing Hildegard's "visionary cosmology"; Walter Pagel including her in his Dictionary of Scientific Biography; Frank Anderson describing her work on the classification of herbs; and Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead including her in a study of the history of women in medicine.¹¹

Even with this cursory glance at secondary source material available to the English reader, and with the knowledge that works in German and French are far more extensive, it is clear that Hildegard was a woman whose talents extended into a wide range of different areas. It is also clear that there has been relatively little, if any, consideration of Hildegard's significance as a philosopher a chapter on her contribution to the history of the philosophy of sex identity was included in the recently published book The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution: 750 B.C.-1250 A.D.¹² In the remainder of this paper some of the conclusions from this text will be considered in the attempt to situate Hildegard as a break-through theorist in the field of the philosophy of sex identity.

In order to consider Hildegard as a philosopher it is important to reject a pervading myth about her methodology. As Sr. Adelgundis Führkrötter, OSB, has recently lamented Hildegard is often described simply as "a secretary of

the Holy Ghost".¹³ The implication of this myth is that Hildegard did not apply discursive reasoning or observation of the senses to her theories, but that she simply wrote down what God told her. If that were the case, then Hildegard could not be considered as a philosopher, or a theologian, for that matter. She would be limited instead to the category of the great mystical writers who shared their personal revelations with others. Unfortunately, Hildegard is much herself to blame for the myth, for she at times did describe herself in ways that implied that revelation was the only source for her knowledge. In one text she states: "I understood the writings of the prophets, and the other saints, and of certain philosophers, without any human instruction."¹⁴ In the Scivias Hildegard reports her famous mystical illumination at the age of forty-two and describes the infusion of a great light which enabled her to understand the meaning of the Bible without knowing its linguistic structure.¹⁵ Furthermore, in one particular vision she reports that God told her that "thou dost not get this knowledge from men, for thou receivest it from above."¹⁶

If we remain with these pronouncements by Hildegard then we would not be able to consider her as a philosopher struggling to understand the world by the use of her reason and the observation of the senses. It is only through

careful analysis of her lengthy arguments that the dynamic of Hildegard's philosophical mind working in complement with her mystical experience begins to emerge. Joseph Singer suggests that Hildegard's writings give evidence of familiarity with the main theories of Aristotle's De Caelo et Mondo and Meteorologica, Isidore's De Rerum Natura, Bernard Sylvester's De Mundi Universitate Sive Metacosmos et Microcosmos, Constantine of Africa's On the Nature of Man, and Hugh St. Viktor's On the Members and Parts of Man.¹⁷ We know that Hildegard was educated in a double monastery within the Benedictine tradition, that is, a monastery of monks side by side with a monastery of nuns. Therefore, she would have had access to sources available to the Benedictine monks in the male side of the monastery. Since all higher education in Europe from 800 to 1200 occurred in the context of the Benedictine monasteries, it is logical to conclude that Hildegard had been able to use the sources found in the outstanding Benedictine libraries. Therefore, even though certain of her mystical insights came directly from what she believed was an infused knowledge from God, it would seem that a great deal of her knowledge also came through the other sources of her education and her own personal observation. It is the latter pathways that I will argue in this paper were the main sources for her original work in the

area of the philosophy of sex identity.

To begin with, Hildegard appealed to the medieval categories of elements and humours when she struggled to come to terms with a philosophy of sex identity. She was familiar with Aristotle's arrangement of the four elements in a hierarchally descending order only through secondary sources. Within the Aristotelian cosmology the two higher elements were also thought to have a closer relationship to male identity and the two lower elements to female identity as follows:

fire	hot and dry	man	lighter	superior
air	hot and moist	man		
water	cold and moist	woman		
earth	cold and dry	woman	heavier	inferior ¹⁸

When Hildegard presents her own cosmology of the relation of male and female identity to the elements she does so in the context of a theological discussion of the interpretation of the origins of woman and man in the story of Eve and Adam in Heilkunde. She argued that Adam should be associated with the element earth because he was taken directly from earth, while woman should be identified with air because she was taken from the flesh of man which is of a lighter quality than earth. In the following passage we see Hildegard then struggling to integrate a theological argument with an empirical observation about the nature of woman's

body in childbirth. In explaining that man had to go through a transformation from earth to flesh she states:

The woman, however, did not experience such a transformation; taken from flesh she remained flesh. That is why ... she is so to speak an airy being, for it is her task to bear the child to maturity and to give it birth. She also has a cloven skull and a thinner skin so that child she carries in her womb may get air.¹⁹

Hildegard's lack of knowledge of the biology of pregnancy is evident here. However, the significant point for our discussion is that Hildegard brings about a shift in the hierarchy of the elements in relation to sex identity even though she uses incorrect information about the way in which the fetus receives air. Her cosmology could be summarized as follows:

fire	man	highest	
air	woman)		neither sex is naturally
)	middle	
water	woman)		superior or inferior
earth	man	lowest	

Therefore, while in the Aristotelian cosmology man is associated with the two higher elements which are viewed as lighter, active and superior and woman is associated with the two lower elements which are viewed as heavier, passive and inferior; in Hildegard's cosmology the man is associated

with the highest and the lowest elements while woman is associated with the two middle elements. In this way, Hildegard subtly brings about a shift in the balance of the identification of the two sexes so that neither man nor woman is superior or inferior by nature. As will be seen later in this paper Hildegard also suggests that both sexes incorporate all four elements in different proportions.

In the area of generation Hildegard follows the Aristotelian tradition as qualified by Porphyry and Galen when she states that woman provides no fertile seed. However, in this context she shifts somewhat the Aristotelian identification of the male with the hot and the female with the cold. The Greek philosopher argued that woman was an "infertile man" because of the coldness of her body. He believed that the fertile seed of the male was the result of a purified blood, boiled up, by the greater heat of the male body. Woman, who was colder, could not achieve this transformation of blood into seed and, therefore, she contributed only passive infertile matter or blood to the process of generation. In Parts of Animals Aristotle states:

A woman is as it were an infertile male; the female in fact, is female on account of an inability of a sort, viz. it lacks the power to concoct semen out of the final state of nourishment (this is either blood or its

counterpart in bloodless animals) because of the coldness of its nature.²⁰

Hildegard agrees with the Aristotelian basic premise that woman is naturally cooler than man, but she does not attribute it to an instability or lack of heat as much as to the greater presence of the element air:

The fertile, natural power of the woman is cooler and richer in blood than that of the man; the woman's forces are weaker than this; consequently woman burns less vehemently during sexual pleasure than the man ... her windy forces are more of the air, her vessels more open and her limbs can part easier than is the case of the man.²¹

However, in spite of this cooler nature, Hildegard argues that woman heats up the cold seed which man has deposited in her:

[The man's] blood pours into the woman a cold foam which then congeals in the warmth of the motherly tissue taking on that blood-mixed state. In the beginning the foam remains in the warmth and later is maintained by the dry humours of the motherly nourishment growing into a dry, miniature like form of the human being.²²

Hildegard believed that God implanted the soul into the fetus after a certain preliminary development. She introduced a wide range of natural metaphors to indicate the complete integration of soul and body, for example: the soul "pours into the foam and intertwines into all its limbs like a strong, warm wind, that sweeps across the plains," or

"For as water pours through all the earth, so the soul passes through the whole body"; and again, the soul "wanders everywhere through this form like a caterpillar spinning silk."²³ For Hildegard, the fully developed human being had a completely integrated soul and body.

Hildegard's insistence on the integration of soul and body shows a different approach from that found in the Platonic theory of human identity which competed with Aristotelianism in medieval thought. The Platonic view of the relation of the soul and body stated that the soul is entirely distinct from the body, and that it is caught in the body as in a prison from which it seeks to be freed.²⁴ In the Neo-Platonic school the relationship of this dualistic approach to human identity is described by Porphyry in a letter to his wife Marcella as follows:

For we are bound in the chains that nature has cast around us by the belly, the throat and other parts of the body, and by the use of these and the pleasant sensations that arise therefrom and the fears they occasion. But if we rise superior to their witchcraft, and avoid the snares laid by them, we have led our captor captive. Neither trouble thyself much whether thou be male or female in body, nor look on thyself as a woman, for I did not approach thee as such.²⁵

In this passage, sex identity is viewed as an insignificant part of human identity. Porphyry argues that his identity

has no relation to the body at all when he tells Marcella:

I am in reality not this person who can be touched or perceived by any of the senses, but that which is farthest removed from the body, the colourless and formless essence which can by no means be touched by the hands, but is grasped by the mind alone.²⁶

When Hildegard's philosophy of sex identity is described below it will be evident that she took an entirely different approach to human identity than the dualism evident in the Platonic and Neo-Platonic schools. She insisted upon the complete integration of soul and body and upon the subsequent importance of this integrated human identity in male and female relationships. Her philosophy of sex identity will be seen as an historical a break-through in the context in which woman was devalued in the Aristotelian tradition and in which the body was devalued in the Platonic tradition.

The key source for Hildegard's philosophy of sex identity is found in her text entitled Causae et Curae which is available in German translation as Heilkunde. In this work several chapters are devoted to a consideration of sex identity. In addition to the previously mentioned association of the elements of air and water with woman's identity and of fire and earth with man's identity, Hildegard introduced a complex theory of four different types of women and men who have different relations to the four humours:

blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile. The striking aspect of this analysis is that Hildegard integrated bodily and character dimensions of human identity with a consideration of fertility and disease.

Hildegard's methodology explores pheomonologically and empirically the different kinds of people she encountered in her life. Hildegard entered the convent of Mount St. Disibode at fourteen after being educated there from the age of eight. We know that she worked as a nurse-physician in the hospice attached to the monastery for several years, and that she was widely recognized as an expert in the use of herbs in treating disease. It is highly probable, therefore, that Hildegard formulated her philosophy of the four different kinds of women and of men by careful observation of the relationship between the body and character as well as its specific functioning in both healthy and diseased contexts. It also appears that she gathered most of her information from speaking with and listening to women. Therefore Hildegard's work offers one of the earliest historical records, if not the earliest, of an analysis of male sexual identity and female sexual identity from the perspective of the consciousness of woman.

Another aspect of Hildegard's educational formation is also relevant to this study. She lived for many years in

close proximity to the men's monastery at Mount St. Disibode and was assigned the monk Volman to have as her secretary sometime after she was elected Abbess at the age of thirty-nine. Therefore, while Hildegard drew extensively upon the experience of women as her primary empirical base of analysis, she also was in constant communication with men. In this way Hildegard was able to integrate the perspective of a complementary male experience into her female oriented philosophical understanding of human nature. Later in her life Hildegard decided to found a new monastery for women at Rupertsberg. However, in this move Hildegard did not withdraw from the intellectual association with men. We know that in addition to her wide correspondence with men, Hildegard gave many public lectures in southern Germany. Barbara Newman describes her travels as follows:

Between 1158 and 1159 Hildegard travelled along the Main, preaching at monastic communities in Mainz, Wertheim, Wurzburg, Kitzingen, Ebrach, and Bamberg. Her second trip in 1160 took her to Metz, Krauftal, and Trier, where she preached publicly. Within the next three years she visited Boppard, Andernach, Siegburg, and Werden, addressing clergy and people together at Cologne. After 1170 she undertook her fourth and final journey in Swabia, preaching at Roderkirchan, Maulbronn, Hirsau, Kirchheim, and Zwiefalten.²⁷

Even though Hildegard certainly interacted with men of her age, her work did not become integrated into the main

stream of philosophical studies. There is a false legend about a trip that she took to Paris in 1174 to have her works considered by the Bishop of Paris for inclusion in the curriculum of the Cathedral School of Paris, the forerunner of the University of Paris. While Hildegard did correspond with a Master of Theology in Paris before her death, her works were destined to remain unintegrated into the university system of education until after to the dispersion of texts from monastic libraries following the French Revolution.²⁸ Indeed, it is not until the twentieth century that they have become accessible to the wider scholarly audience through the publication of high quality German translations. Therefore, it is really only today that a careful analysis of Hildegard's philosophy is able to begin. With this goal in mind, I will now continue to develop a systematic description of Hildegard's philosophy of sex identity. I will concentrate first on her analysis of man's identity and secondly on her analysis of woman's identity.

In the following chart Hildegard's basic views about four different kinds of men is summarized:

Hildegard's Four Types of Men

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
Blood	fiery	fiery and windy	windy and black bile	weak in all respects
Colour of skin	red hue	mixed red and white hue	sombre	unclean and pale
Fertility	very	moderate	partial	infertile
Character	hearty and hale	balanced	very dangerous, no moderation	weak effeminate
Children	tend to be unrestrained, coarse-mannered children	balanced, happy, well-mannered children	mean or evil children	

The originality of Hildegard's analysis of different types of men as experienced by women predates Jean Paul Sartre's phenomenological analysis of the "gaze" by seven centuries.³⁰

[The first type of men] love coition with women and are anxious to get out of other men's way and to avoid them, for they are more inclined to women than to men.... As soon as they get sight of a woman, hear of one or simply fancy one in thought, their blood is burning with a blaze. Their eyes are kept fixed on the object of their love like arrows as soon as they catch sight of it.³¹

She argues that the first type of man has too much of the element 'fire' in his nature -- this imbalance leads to his lack of discipline and is revealed in the intensity of his gaze which desires woman as something to possess. In

contrast to this character, Hildegard describes the second type of man as having a balanced nature:

The addition of wind in their genitals moderates and tames the fiery power within themselves.... That is why one refers to them as a golden edifice of sexual embrace.... With women they can have an honorable and fruitful relationship. The eyes of such men can meet squarely with those of the women, much in contrast to those other men's eyes that were fixed on them like arrows.³²

It is clear that Hildegard believed that relations of complementarity between women and men were possible. In those relationships the two sexes achieved a balance which was revealed in the body through expression of the eyes "which meet squarely with those of women."

Hildegard referred to a relationship which included sexual intercourse in the second type of man as a "golden edifice of embrace," and she was also interested in relations between the sexes in the context of consecrated celibacy. She argues that the second type of men "are also capable from abstaining from the [women] and to look at them in a friendly and moderate way."³³ Then, in a fascinating passage she attributes their success to the presence of the female element 'air' in their nature which balances the masculine 'fire and earth' dynamic:

Often they too must bear some pain when they try with all strength to abstain; but they are so adroit, a wisdom that takes its beautiful self-control out of the female element; for they are in possession of a sensible understanding.³⁴

The view that woman is more self controlled than men as suggested by Hildegard is in stark contrast with the vast majority of medieval writings which viewed woman as less controlled and more emotional than man.³⁵ Therefore, once again we see Hildegard present a philosophy of sex identity which follows an original line of thought.

Hildegard reflects on the difficulties which celibacy poses for the first type of man. She states: "They wither away and drag about as if dying, unless they can loose the foam of their seed in another way by means of lustful dreams or thought or perverse acts."³⁶ Hildegard then reflects on the need for such men to avoid women altogether:

Should these types wish to shun women voluntarily, may it be out of necessity, shame, fear or love for God, then they have to shun them like poison and have to flee from them, because they find it too hard not to embrace women.³⁷

In this way Hildegard's analysis offers an insight into some of the more satirical medieval literature that counsels men to avoid women at all costs and which even suggests that women are the cause of men's downfall. This kind of literature can be seen as possibly originating from the

concerns of the first kind of man as described by Hildegard. However, this view of woman as something to be avoided has little to do with the ideal that men can achieve in relation to women which is found in the second -- or balanced -- nature.

Hildegard's discernment of the different possible ways in which a man may relate to a woman is given an even further development in her analysis of the two further extremes of men found in types three and four. Neither of these is capable of relating to women, but for different reasons -- the third, because he actively dislikes women and the fourth because he is indifferent to women. Hildegard describes the third type of man as follows:

In addition to wind in their genitals they have three characteristic features: for one, it is fiery, then also windy and finally intermixed with the smoke of the black bile; therefore, they are incapable of having a genuine loving relationship with any being. Through that they become bitter, avaricious and full of foolishness and abundant passion. In intercourse with women they know no moderation and act like donkeys.³⁸

She uses many animal metaphors to describe these men as like wolves of prey, lions, or bears who "if they were permitted ... would kill a woman during intercourse, for there is nothing of the tenderness of loving desire or of sincerity in their embrace."³⁹ Hildegard argues that these men are also

incapable of fruitful celibate relations with women because of their "instinctive hatred towards [women's] sex."⁴⁰ In an interesting way she concludes that they are incapable of meaningful relations with men as well:

They neither receive love from their fellow men nor have any inclination to a social life of their own, all the more since they exhaust themselves with continuous figments of their imagination. Then when they meet people they are already full of hate, malevolence, and the wrong attitude so they can't enjoy company any more.⁴¹

In this analysis Hildegard reveals her capacity as a psychologist penetrating the deeper layers of human behaviour and character. In this way, her typography predates the work of Freud or Jung by several centuries.

The fourth type of man is given a similarly careful analysis. This man suffers from a general weakness in his possession of all the elements:

The wind in their genitals has little fiery force, for it is lukewarm like water that has hardly been heated. His two spheres, meant to serve him like bellows to mend the fire, are stunted, underdeveloped and too feeble to erect the trunk, for they do not hold within them the riches of the fiery power. Such men can be loved in sexual embrace, whereby they desire to cohabit with women as well as men....⁴²

In an interesting reflection on the capacity for these men for a fruitful celibate life, Hildegard argues that their

general weakness in sexual identity mitigates against their effectiveness in spiritual life as well.

Obviously, they do not have to suffer much from lust in their emotional life, except for having to grapple with it at times in their imagination or in their ideal life. Because they demonstrate such deficiencies in their bodily condition, they are also awkward in drafting their spiritual world.⁴³

Therefore, the type of men who are indifferent to women sexually do not make very good monks according to Hildegard. She concludes that it is exactly the same kind of man who made the best sexual partner, or the man of the golden edifice of embrace, that also makes the most fruitful companion of women in relations of consecrated celibacy. For her it is the second type, or the balanced nature that is the ideal in both worlds.

As previously stated, from the historical perspective the above analysis of the four types of men, based on a phenomenological methodology, is the earliest record of a woman philosopher analysing the contents of a feminine consciousness to consider the nature of man in a systematic way. There are some previous women philosophers who have written a little about man's nature such as the neo-Pythagoreans Perictione, Phyntis and Theano, the playwright Roswitha, or the Christian stoic Heloise. However, as far

as we know, no woman previous to Hildegard systematically studied man's nature as it related to woman. Therefore, Hildegard is without doubt a break-through theorist as a woman philosopher. She is also significant among all philosophers for her work in beginning to consider the various facets of sex identity using an integrated approach to body and soul. In this way, Hildegard stands out among male philosophers as well.

In addition, Hildegard also developed an analysis of four different types of women. This philosophical study makes her among the first to reflect systematically on the possible variety of woman's responses to men rather than rest content with a generalization about all women. A summary of her views is found in the following chart:

Hildegard's Four Types of Women

	Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
Muscular	very heavy	moderately heavy	delicate	meagre
Blood	clean, red	whiter	drier	slimy
Colour of skin	clear and white	sullen	pale	dark
Fertility	moderate	very	partial	rare
Menstruation	light	moderate	heavy	very heavy

Character	artistic, content	efficient, manly, strict	intellectual, unstable, benevolent, ill- loyal, chaste humoured
Possible diseases after early menopause	depression, melancholy, pains in side, unhealthy glandular secretions	insanity, problems with spleen, dropsy tumours	paralysis, imbalanced, liver problems, cancer
			abdominal pains, spinal pains early death

In view of the fact that Hildegard's Causae et Curae is not available in English and because of my desire to indicate the empirical nature of her methodology, I will include translations of extensive intact passages on her analysis of woman's identity. Depending upon the common medieval cosmology of elements and humours, Hildegard integrates and develops a complex theory of character bodily types.

The first type or 'artistic' woman

Some women have a natural disposition to be heavy; their muscular system is soft and of a delicate tissue; their veins are fine and carry plentiful, clean blood. It is true they have less blood, due to the slender formation of their vessels, but their tissue grows all the better and is richly mixed with blood. Such women have a clear and white complexion. They are charming and lovely in their love embrace; also they are knowledgable in the fine arts and thus are content in their frame of mind. During their menstruation they suffer little bleeding; their uterus is well developed and able to bear. Thus they are fertile and able to take in the male seed; however, not many children are born. If they have to remain without men and can not give birth to children they suffer from quite a number of bodily conditions. If they have men, they are

healthy. When the blood of the monthly purification is oozed away ahead of time, they often become depressive and melancholic, they suffer from pain in the side or something worm-like develops in their tissue; glandular secretions, called scrofula, may flow out, or on rare occasions they are taken ill with scab.⁴⁴

The first type of woman, like the first type of man is in need of the complementary sex to be happy. The greater presence of the element fire in both appears to explain the natural tendency towards passion and redder blood. In Hildegard's description of this artistic woman she indicates the ways in which the body is affected when the character is thwarted by lack of men or by an early menopause. Her reasoning process rests upon an assumption of the complete integration of body and soul.

The second type or 'efficient' woman

There are other women whose muscular system is not very well developed, since they have a widely spread vessel system carrying healthy, white blood that contains very little slime and thus has a light colour. They have plain features, a sullen colour of skin, are strict and efficient and show a somewhat manly temperament. During their menstruation they lose the right amount of blood, neither too much nor too little. Since their vessels are so well developed, they are extremely fertile and bear easily, all the more since both the uterus and the other viscera are strongly built. They are very attractive to men and understand how to captivate them; therefore, men are very fond of such women. They can abstain from intercourse, if they want to, without suffering particular damage. However, often when they do avoid the company of men, they are quite

difficult and unbearable in their manners. If they can, however, be with men, they often become too voluptuous, as they then show no further inclination to abstinence, and overshoot the mark

in sexual desire in contrast to men. And since they do have a somewhat manly nature, and a great deal of procreative power, they often grow down on their chin. If their monthly bleeding stops ahead of time, they once in a while fall ill with mental diseases, a kind of insanity. Moreover, they can become splenic and dropsical, or their tissue in some areas begins to proliferate as is the case with tumours or wild growing flesh shows up at some organ like pustules on a tree or apple.⁴⁵

This second type of woman shares a 'balanced' nature with the second type of man in that she partakes of a greater presence of the masculine element earth. Hildegard attributed the element earth with powers of fertility and she argues in another text that man has a beard and more hair on his body than woman "because man was formed of earth".⁴⁶ The presence of the masculine element in the second kind of woman explains the 'efficient, manly character', the fertility in child bearing and the tendency to grow hair on the chin in later years. It may also be part of the reason for her loss of control when she is in the presence of men, for Hildegard had argued conversely that the second type of man was full of self control because he partook of the feminine element air. Once again we find Hildegard groping to explain character in terms of bodily constitution.

The third type or the 'intellectual' woman

Then there are women, who have delicate flesh, but a coarse bone structure and whose vessels are moderately developed carrying dry, reddish blood. Their complexion is pale. They are intelligent and benevolent; they are honoured by people and thus are respected. During their menstruation they suffer from a loss of blood. Their uterus is well developed and they are fertile. Although men like their way of living, they shun them a bit, for such women attract them, is true, but do not know how to captivate them. In sexual union, they act chaste, are loyal to their men and healthy with them, but suffering if without them. They are ailing, both because they do not know in which particular man to trust or because they have not got a man at all. If the monthly bleeding sets out ahead of time, they easily become paralyzed and diffuse in their humours, such that the whole organization of the humours becomes ineffective. Then they turn liverish or fall ill with the black "dragon humours" or develop breast cancer.⁴⁷

It is when we read this third analysis that it becomes apparent that Hildegard is not giving an exactly parallel analysis of the four types of men and four types of women. The third type of man had been described as containing black bile and hating women, while the third type of woman is attracted to men but is dryer in humours and is not able to keep a man's interest. It is interesting to consider how Hildegard might classify herself, that is, as artistic, efficient or intellectual. Judging externally, it would appear that she partakes in all three rather equally, which raises the question of whether or not she believed most women

contained a mixture of the pure types as she described them. If this view is correct, then Hildegard's descriptions could be simply general guidelines rather than rigid descriptive classifications. In any event, the third type of woman appears to be loyal and chaste more out of lack of passion and intensity rather than from an active choice, and in this sense she would be significantly different from the first and second types.

The fourth or 'unstable' type of woman

Finally there are women who have meager muscles, big vessels, a mediocre bone structure, and a blood that contains more slime than actual blood. Their tan is also a mixture of blue-gray and black. These women are unstable, verbose in thought and ill-humoured when tormented by pain. They have little resistance and thus often fall ill with melancholy. During their menstruation they suffer considerable loss of blood; by that they are sterile for their uterus is weak and frail. For that reason, they cannot receive a man's seed in the proper manner and hold it, nor can they warm it up. Thus they are healthier, stronger and merrier without men, all the more since they often feel very weak after having had intercourse with men. Men likewise have a disinclination for such women and shun them, for they attract men very little and also love them very little. And should they really at one point reach a sexual pleasure, it will not last but shortly. Meanwhile it is possible that some of them, should they come together with strong, full-blooded men, can bear at least one child.... If however they are together with other men, weak in nature, they will not give birth, and will remain sterile. If the monthly bleeding sets out ahead of the usual time, they get gout or swellings on their legs or a head ailment caused by the black bile or pains in their spine or abdomen or tumours

that formerly could not develop due to menstruation.⁴⁸

This woman is both weak and prone to having more black bile than a balanced nature would allow. It is important to note that Hildegard does not suggest that such a woman, who is happier without men, should be a nun. On the contrary she implies that such a woman is unsuitable for any kind of fertility, biological or otherwise.

Hildegard's general description of the four types of women and men and of the interaction of the sexes is summarized below:

Hildegard's Theory of the Interaction of the Sexes			
Four Types of Men: Generally More Earth and Fire			
Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
too much fire	balanced air and fire	too much water in form of bile	weak in all elements
passionately interested in sexual relations with women	honourable and fruitful relationship with women (sexual and celibate)	hates women, masochistic	indifferent to women, effeminate
Four Types of Women: Generally More Air and Water			
Type I	Type II	Type III	Type IV
more earth through heavy muscular structure, more fire through red blood	balanced earth through moderate muscular structure, more air through white blood	less earth through delicate muscular structure, less water with drier blood	weak in all elements through meagre muscular structure, slimy blood
needs to be with men	likes to be with men, but does not need to	remains loyal to men, but suffers because cannot keep their interest	not interested in men
moderately fertile	very fertile	partially fertile	rarely fertile
Generative Relationship			

It is now possible after the above description to consider again the reasons for my claim that Hildegard of Bingen is a break-through theorist in the philosophy of sex identity. As a medieval writer from the twelfth century Hildegard is significant in a variety of ways. First of all, she is the first philosopher to use a phenomenological method to analyse sex identity. Secondly, she is the first philosopher to analyse sex identity from the primary perspective of woman's experience, but also with the complementary experience of men. Thirdly, Hildegard's philosophy of sex identity emphasized a complete integration of body and soul. This integration allowed her to study with equal ease issues of character, patterns of menstruation and fertility, questions of disease and health, and the interaction of the sexes in both situations of sexual intercourse and celibacy. Fourthly, Hildegard raised the question of whether the male can have both masculine and feminine aspects and of whether the female can have both masculine and feminine aspects in their respective identities. Fifthly, Hildegard appears to continually grope towards a balanced view of sexual identity which avoids the rejection of the body found in the Platonic tradition and the devaluation of woman found in the Aristotelian tradition. For all of these reasons, Hildegard is important to the

history of the philosophy of sex identity as a break-through theorist. Being the first to ask the series of questions she posed, she really set the ground work for the field.

The above analysis has also indicated that Hildegard was a thorough going thinker in the traditional sense of using her senses and discursive reasoning to reach a wide range of conclusions about sexual identity. In her work she combined a medieval cosmology of the elements and humours which most scientists of the time believed was empirically evident; with her own acute observations of the differences among individuals. Her arguments were practical and concrete. Therefore, it can be concluded that the above description of Hildegard's theory of sex identity has demonstrated that she was an important philosopher within her own historical context.

The next step in the process of reclaiming Hildegard as a philosopher must involve an evaluative phase. Once her views are available to scholars, it is important to begin to evaluate their validity and soundness. In anticipation of this process I would like to mention that I have argued in The Concept of Woman that Hildegard is the founder of the philosophy of sex complementarity.⁴⁹ This evaluation of her work is made after extensive consideration of the writings of the major philosophers who precede her in Greek and medieval

philosophy. It also considers the relation of her theory of sex complementarity to Platonic sex unity and Aristotelian sex polarity. While it is not possible to recapitulate this evaluation here, it is important to note that in my view Hildegard was not simply a break-through theorist in the philosophy of sex identity in general, but also in the specific kind of theory of sex identity which I have called sex complementarity.

At the same time, there are some important critical questions that must now be asked of Hildegard. To what extent do her views about sex identity have relevance for today? How did she understand the relation between biological nature and freedom of self creation? How much of her theory is limited by the outdated science of her times, and how much of it is able to be transferred and used as a foundation today? For example, is it possible to see her insistence on the integration of body and soul as a central factor in a contemporary philosophy of sex identity? What is the relation between certain physiological changes in the body and moods or certain aspects of character? While we would not refer to elements and humours, might we not be using a similar methodology when we consider the effect of hormonal or genetic factors on sex identity? To what extent can these biological factors be transcended in the acts of

women and men? These questions now indicate a general direction of evaluation of Hildegard for the contemporary philosopher of sex identity.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Sr. Prudence Allen, R.S.M., The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution (750 BC-AD 1250) (Montreal and London: Eden Press, 1985), p. 295.

2. Bruce Hozeski, Ordo Virtutum: Hildegard of Bingen's Liturgical Morality Play, Ph. D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1969.

3. Bruce Hozeski, Hildegard of Bingen's Scivias (Santa Fe: Bear and Co., 1985).

4. Dr. Werner Lauter, Hildegard-Bibliographie (Alzey: Verlag Der Rheinhessischen Druckwerkstätte, 1984).

5. Peter Dronke, "Hildegard of Bingen as Poetess and Dramatist" in Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages. New Departures in Poetry 1000-1150 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 150-192; Richard Axton, "Nunnery: Hildegard of Bingen's Ordo Virtutum" in European Drama of the Early Middle Ages (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1974) 94-99; and Bruce Hozeski, "Hildegard of Bingen's Ordo Virtutum: The Earliest Discovered Liturgical Morality Play" in American Benedictine Review, 26, 1975, No. 3, 251-259.

6. Adelgundis Führkötter, The Miniatures from the Book Scivias -- Know the Ways -- of St. Hildegard of Bingen from the Illuminated Rupertsberg Codex (Translated by Fr. Hockey, O.S.B.) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977).

7. Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party. A Symbol of our Heritage (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979) 75-77, 144; and ---- with Susan Hill, Embroidering our Heritage. The Dinner Party Needlework (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980) 144-151.

8. Barbara Grant, "Five Liturgical Songs by Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)" in Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 5, 1980, No. 3, 557-567; ---- "O virga ac diadema": A Twelfth Century Sequence by Hildegard von Bingen and its Prophetic Sources, Master of Arts Thesis, Theology Department, Fordham University, April 26, 1978; Ian Bent, "Hildegard of Bingen" in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, 8, 1980, 553-556; and Christopher Page, "Sequences and Hymns by Abbess Hildegard of Bingen" (London: Hyperion Records Ltd., 1982).

9. Barbara Newman, O Feminea Forma: God and Woman in the Works of St. Hildegard (1098-1179), Dissertation, Yale University, 1981. See also her forthcoming book based on this dissertation Sister of Wisdom: Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Charles Czarski, The Prophecies of St. Hildegard of Bingen, Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1983; and Patricia Ann North, Mysticism and Prophetism in Hildegard of Bingen and in Ramanuga: An Essay in History and

Hermeneutics, Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977.

10. W.P. Eckert, "The Vision of Synagoga in the Scivias of Hildegard of Bingen" in Standing Before God (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1981) 301-311; Bernard Scholz, "Hildegard on the Nature of Woman" in American Benedictine Review 31, 1980, No. 4, 361-383.

11. Charles Singer, "The Visions of Hildegard of Bingen" in From Magic to Science. Essays on the Scientific Twilight (London: Benn, 1928) 199-239; Walter Pagel, "Hildegard of Bingen" in Dictionary of Scientific Biography, Vol 6 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972) 396-398; Kent Thomas Kraft, The Eye Sees More Than the Heart Knows: The Visionary Cosmology of Hildegard of Bingen, Dissertation University of Wisconsin, 1977; Frank Anderson, "The 'Physica' of Hildegard of Bingen" in An Illustrated History of the Herbals (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 51-58; Kate Campbell Hurd-Mead, "Saint Hildegard of Bingen" in A History of Women in Medicine. From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (Haddam, Conn.: The Haddam Press, 1938) 183-194.

12. Allen, op. cit., 292-315, 408-409.

13. In a recent conversation with Sr. Adelgundis Führkrötter, O.S.B., the curator of Hildegard's papers at the

Monastery of St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany, February 1986, she noted with concern that this view of Hildegard's source of knowledge ignored her pragmatic and empirical mind.

14. Hildegard of Bingen, Vita (LL. 17, 104A) translated by Barbara Newman and printed in "Hildegard of Bingen: Visions and Validation:", presented at the American Academy of Religion, Dallas, December 1983, p. 5 of the unpublished manuscript, footnote 9.

15. Hildegard of Bingen, Scivias (CCM 43-43a) in Barbara Newman, ibid., footnote 8.

16. Francesca Maria Steele, The Life and Visions of St. Hildegard (London: Heath, Cranton and Ousely, Ltd., 1914) 132.

17. Singer, op. cit., 235-238.

18. Aristotle, Meteorologica (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1952) 378b 10-12; 328b 28-32; ---- On the Heavens (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1939) 295b-296b; and ---- Generation of Animals (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann Ltd., 1943) 739b-740a, 716a.

19. Hildegard of Bingen, Heilkunde: das Buch von den Grund und Wesen und der Heilung der Krankheiten (Causae et Curae) (Salzburg: O. Muller Verlag, 1972), translated from

the German by Jasmin el Kordi-Schmitt, as are all subsequent passages from this text, p. 124.

20. Aristotle, Parts of Animals (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press and William Heinemann, 1937) 728a 13-27.

21. Hildegard of Bingen, Heilkunde, op. cit., p. 143. In another passage Hildegard implies that the infertility of woman's seed is the result of her generation from flesh rather than from earth and flesh. In this way she identifies earth, or the lowest of the elements, as central to fertility. See, "The blood of the woman, who is weak and fragile, has no such seed; rather, she emits a thin and scanty foam, for she unlike man is not composed of two different types, namely earth and flesh, but is only of man's flesh.", 125.

22. Ibid., 125.

23. Ibid., 126, 102 and Steele, op. cit., 213.

24. See Allen, The Concept of Woman, op. cit., pp. 57-74, for a detail account of Plato's views.

25. Porphyry, The Philosopher and his Wife, Marcella (London: George Redway, 1896) (33), pp. 77-78.

26. Ibid. (8), p. 60.

27. Barbara Newman, "Divine Power made Perfect in Weakness: St. Hildegard on the Frail Sex" in Medieval

Religious Women (Cistercian Publications, forthcoming 1985)
p. 18 of manuscript, footnote 54.

28. I am indebted to Sr. Adelgundis Führkrötter, O.S.B. for this information about the relation of the French Revolution to the dispersion of Hildegard's works. For a detailed account of the way in which the foundation of the University of Paris excluded women from its student body see Chapter V of Allen, The Concept of Woman, op. cit., I argue in this text that Hildegard's works were excluded in great part because of the influx of translations of Aristotelian texts. By 1255 these books were made required reading at the University of Paris, and so Aristotle's arguments for sex polarity were integrated into the foundation of the western university system. Since Paris served as a model for all the new universities which were formed over the next century, Aristotle's arguments for sex polarity, rather than Hildegard's arguments for sex complementarity as formulated within the monastic tradition of double monasteries, became the norm.

29. Allen, The Concept of Woman, op. cit., p. 304.
All charts are taken from this text.

30. Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), "If the Other is on principle the one who looks at me, then we must be able to explain the

meaning of the Other's look." p. 257.

31. Hildegard, Heilkunde, op. cit., p. 138.

32. Ibid., p. 140.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. See Allen, The Concept of Woman, op. cit., chapters on Juvenal, pp. 182-185 and Lucretius, pp. 135-141 for specific examples. Of course, it may also be traced back to Aristotle's view that in woman reason is without authority over the emotions, p. 109.

36. Hildegard, Heilkunde, op. cit., p. 139.

37. Ibid., p. 140.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., p. 141.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 142.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., p. 144.

45. Ibid., pp. 144-145.

46. Ibid., p. 93.

47. Ibid., p. 145.

48. Ibid., pp. 145-146.

49. Allen, Concept of Woman, op. cit., pp. 408-409.